



Influence...It's So Much More

What Sort of Impact Are You Making?

I recently saw that an Influencer had been banned from a particular restaurant in China. Apparently he had a blog that evaluated restaurants in the area. However, he ate so much shrimp at this one buffet restaurant each time he came that the owner said he was losing too much money to let him keep coming. Now that is a great job...convincing restaurant owners that it is in their best interest to let you eat without having to pay for your meals. I saw where another influencer thought she deserved to stay for free at a resort in Indonesia, but the owner discovered she only had a few followers and ordered her off the property. I have often thought that if I could have a career where I was paid to eat food at restaurants, sleep and have my dreams studied or go to school (which I am sure my dad thought at one point I had become a professional student), I would do it. Of course being an influencer who is paid to travel the world would be nice! Do you think of yourself as an influencer? Are you interested at all in having an impact on the lives of others? If so, consider what is possible as we look at a lifestyle of influencing others.

We are going to take a look at an impactful song found in the Bible and let's see if it is of benefit to you. **Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.** (Psalm 84: 4-7 NIV) The songwriter is depicting the life of an influencer, someone who is impacting the world. This could be you being described here. So what does the songwriter have to say? The sort of influencers who God develops and who make a difference not just for themselves but for God's people make two life changing decisions. The first is that they dwell in God's house. **Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.** (Vs. 4) I'm reminded of Samuel the prophet and priest who literally lived in the Tabernacle of God for years and had life changing encounters with the Lord there. How many of us have that opportunity? Not many. There is much more here than that. Let me explain.

You must always keep in mind that if your faith is in Christ for salvation, you are the "Temple of God." **What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."** (2 Corinthians 6:16 NIV) Wherever you are, the Lord is in you, so it is up to you if you are going to notice Him, pay attention to Him or acknowledge His glory. The songwriter says that the happy ones are ever praising God. It is not a short blip of time, but it is a lifestyle of knowing He's within and celebrating the Lord's presence as King and Savior. Celebration of God is so rare among God's people. We may laugh and sing at a special worship service, especially one led by electrifying talent but what of the short winter days, the chaotic hours at work, the disgust at washing dishes others left behind in the sink, where is the joyful bowing before the goodness of Jesus then? We sometimes forget where we are. Like school children who come off the playground and keep talking to their friends while their teacher is starting the math lesson, we lose track of God and don't notice Him. The great Christ lives within you. Each moment is a time of worship and praise.

Become intentional in your love of God. Don't hold back because you are busy or swamped by work. Give Him moments of praise as He comes to mind. Think more about Jesus than you are accustomed. Focus on Him more than you are used to doing. A transformation gets worked in you as you turn your thoughts, even if for just a moment on Christ. The miraculous cannot be explained by natural mechanisms of biology. God does something in you that science at this time cannot explain. It is far beyond today's science. When your mind is on Jesus and the wonder of Him fills your heart, you are reworked so that something supernatural in you takes place. Which brings us to the second part of this new life you have with God as His Temple.

The songwriter says you gain happiness because God's strength comes into you, but it is not by accident. God's people who are influencers go on pilgrimage with God. **Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.** (Vs. 5) Pilgrimage does not mean you go on some extended trip to Jerusalem or Rome. It is describing a conscious decision to live your life for God wherever you are. This does not mean you make a proclamation of some sort you are all in for God. The heart set on pilgrimage does what God says to do: is merciful, shows kindness, forgives, talks about Jesus, gives glory to God, makes financial sacrifices so God's work is funded, lives with purity, is conscious of what he or she says so it makes God look good. Making the effort to please God gives you strength, moral and psychological as well as emotional strength. I love the example of Ruth who despite growing up in a pagan household decided when as a young woman her husband died to leave her home in Moab and go with her widowed mother-in-law to Bethlehem in Israel. You read her story in the book of Ruth and you see what a powerful woman she was as she followed God and trusted Him. God made her strong and He will make you strong also when you let Jesus be in charge of your life!

The songwriter has a most profound observation to make that you ought to underscore in your Bible or highlight on your phone. **As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.** (Vs. 6) Who is the "they" being described? They are the ones who keep their minds on God living within them and honor Him with their praise as the day moves along. They also live their lives for God on a daily basis, making decisions with Him in mind as Lord. So what happens with them? They make Baca a place of springs. Baca is a place of dryness, of destitution. Some call it the valley of weeping. It is anywhere a person with the Holy Spirit living within might go that has a need for hope and encouragement and the life of Christ transforming what happens there. Baca is where you can impact the world and bring new life. Baca, to use a church term, is your mission field.

What happens to Baca if you are living for Christ and your mind is on Him? Just what the song writer insists. You make a desert into a place of springs; you bring soft autumn rains that inspire hope and restore joy. Consider just a few places in the Bible that bring out the sense of this comment of the songwriter. **But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.** (2 Corinthians 2:14-15 NIV) With God a crucial part of your life, everywhere you go, His presence fills the room. You have God with you, and He reaches beyond you to those who connect with you. I know this sounds strange and perhaps even unbelievable to you, but we see examples of it in the Bible. Peter and John, not long after Jesus ascended and the Holy Spirit came upon them and the other disciples, possessed qualities that radiated the characteristics of Jesus. The Jewish authorities who arrested them because they were proclaiming salvation through Jesus Christ noticed this impact of being with Christ. **When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.** (Acts 4:13 NIV) Later, as Peter walked about Jerusalem and it was abundantly clear that Peter possessed what was in Jesus, something quite strange happened. **As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.** (Acts 5:15 NIV) The infusion of God in you is not just for you; it is for every person who comes in contact with you. You bring Christ wherever you go and that is a most noble responsibility.